

## Required NWQI Screening Criteria Worksheet

### NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

**A screening worksheet must be completed for each eligible EQIP application.**

<p><b>Instructions:</b> This screening worksheet must be completed for each eligible producer applying for EQIP National Water Quality Initiative assistance. Applications will be accepted on a continuous basis; however, an application period has been established for purposes of evaluation, ranking, and funding decisions. The goal of this screening tool is to ensure that conservation technical assistance and EQIP program benefits are managed efficiently to address priority conservation needs related to this national initiative.</p> <p>Completion of this worksheet and documentation does not constitute agreement to provide EQIP program benefits nor approval of a program contract. The original screening worksheet should be filed with the applicant case file or EQIP program file and unless the application is determined to be ineligible, the screening priority (high, medium, and low) must be recorded in ProTracts application priority. Upon request, a copy of the completed screening worksheet may be provided to the applicant.</p>	
<p><b>Detailed Screening Criteria Worksheet – Complete for Each Eligible EQIP Applicant</b></p>	
Applicant Name:	County:
Application No:	Field Office:
Evaluator Name:	Date:
<p><b>Priority Determination for ProTracts – Select One:</b></p>	
<p><b><u>Ineligible Category:</u></b> The EQIP application is associated with land that is not located primarily within the boundaries of the approved watershed for the National Water Quality Initiative. (Enter application in ProTracts, but do not rank. Offer alternative program assistance.)</p>	<p><b>Application Status is “Ineligible”</b></p>
<p><b><u>High Priority Category:</u></b> All of the conservation practices requested in the application will be implemented on land physically located inside the NWQI watershed, <b>AND</b> The application includes core conservation practices (as identified for the pollutants of the eligible water quality initiative 12-digit watershed) on more than 25 percent of the offered acres – <b>OR</b> – The application is for a conservation activity plan (CAP).</p>	<p><b>High Priority Status in ProTracts</b></p>
<p><b><u>Medium Priority Category 1:</u></b> All of the conservation practices requested in the application will be applied on land physically located inside the NWQI watershed, <b>AND</b> The application contains core conservation practices (as identified for the pollutants of the eligible water quality initiative 12-digit watershed).</p>	<p><b>Medium Priority Status in ProTracts</b></p>
<p><b><u>Medium Priority Category 2:</u></b> One or more of the conservation practices requested in the application will be applied on land physically located outside the NWQI watershed, <b>AND</b> The application contains core conservation practices (as identified for the pollutants of the eligible water quality initiative 12-digit watershed). This status is not applicable to applications that are not located primarily within the boundaries of an approved NWQI watershed.</p>	<p><b>Medium Priority Status in ProTracts</b></p>
<p><b><u>Low Priority Category:</u></b> All other applications – low priority applications <u>will not</u> be ranked for FY 2015 NWQI.</p>	<p><b>Low Priority Status in ProTracts</b></p>

The priority determination of high, medium, or low must be recorded in ProTracts application priority for this applicant.

D.C. Approval:		Date Approved:	
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## Section F:

### Required NWQI State Questions and Example Local Questions

#### Required National Water Quality Initiative State Ranking Questions (Maximum State Points – 400)

States must enter the following questions in ProTracts Application Evaluation Ranking Tool (AERT) for each approved NWQI subaccount and watershed:

EQIP NWQI Ranking Questions	Points
1. If the application is for development of a conservation activity plan (CAP), the agency will assign significant ranking priority and conservation benefit by answering "Yes" to the following question. Answering "Yes" to question 1a will result in the application being awarded the maximum amount of points that can be earned for the State priority category.	
<hr/> <b>1a. Is the program application for development of a TSP-prepared CAP? <u>If answer is "Yes," do not answer any other State-level questions.</u></b> If answer is "No," proceed with evaluation to address the remaining questions in this section. <hr/>	400
2. Water Quality – EPA Watersheds:	
2a. Does the application include core conservation practices that will be implemented within ¼ mile of a stream or water body that is threatened (i.e., receives significant runoff of excess nitrogen or phosphorous) and on the EPA 303(d) list, or listed as impaired with a TMDL in place and therefore not on the 303(d) list, or specified as a critical stream or water body authorized by the Regional Conservationist?	100
3. Geographic Impacts:	
3a. Are more than 75 percent of the acres treated <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. Located within a NWQI watershed AND</li><li>ii. Do they have at least one core conservation practice planned on them?</li></ul>	125
4. Collaborative Efforts:	
4a: Are core conservation practices planned for the applicant's treated acres within an existing non-USDA water quality project area addressing the same or similar pollutants?	75

5. Effort to Address Watershed Impairments:	
5a: Does this program application include the implementation of a system of conservation practices which address the NWQI primary resource concerns?	50
6. High-Risk Soils:	
6a: Are core conservation practices to be implemented on offered acres with a majority of soil types that are classified Hydrologic Group D (high runoff) or Group A (high infiltration)?	50
<b>Total Points:</b>	<b>400</b>

### **EXAMPLE LOCAL QUESTIONS**

#### **• Required Local-Level Ranking Criteria**

States are encouraged to utilize local questions that address specific pollutants, soil factors, and stream issues; questions that encourage use of a “systems approach”; and questions that address monitoring. For example, in developing local questions associated with “nutrients,” States are encouraged to utilize questions that address the implementation of nutrient management and cover crops. Below are examples of questions that might be utilized for each of the recommended categories.

#### Examples of questions that address specific impairments:

- Will Nutrient Management (590) be implemented in conjunction with erosion control practices to control the loss of nitrogen and phosphorus from fields?
- Will a cover crop be utilized on at least 25 percent of the offered acres?
- Will livestock be excluded from all streams on the offered acres?

#### Examples of questions that address soil factors that influence water quality:

- Are more than 75 percent of the offered acres on land with a soil vulnerability classification of “moderately high” or “high” as specified by the Vulnerability Assessment and Program Performance Tool? (Comment: Other approved matrices or tools could be incorporated or substituted to target vulnerable land.)
- Will the application of conservation practices reduce the STIR rating to less than on more than 75 percent of the offered acres?

#### Examples of questions that address streams issues:

- Are planned conservation practices within ¼ mile of a blue line stream on a USGS topographic map within the impaired watershed?

#### Examples of questions that utilize a systems approach:

- Will the implementation of one planned conservation practice on at least     percent of the offered acres result in the existence of a conservation system where at least one practice exists in each of the avoid, trap, and control categories?
- Will the implementation of two planned conservation practices on at least     percent of the offered acres result in the existence of a conservation system where at least one practice exists in each of the avoid, trap, and control categories?
- Will the implementation of three planned conservation practices on at least     percent of the offered acres result in the existence of a conservation system where at least one practice exists in each of the avoid, trap, and control categories?

### **Process for Discontinuing and or Selecting New NWQI Watersheds**

NRCS has made a commitment to the Office of Management and Budget that changes to watersheds in NWQI watersheds will be minimal and based on clear justification and documentation. Additional guidance for this process will be issued annually at the beginning of the fiscal year.